

The Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Milestone

The FAO Community inaugurated the Milestone (O-5) Screening Process in 2011 and implemented the Major (O-6) Milestone Screen in November 2014. An integral part of the FAO Career Path, Milestone selection is used as an additional quality cut for placement of officers into high-profile/critical fill Major Staff, Security Cooperation, and Attaché positions, as well as critical community billets. Milestone tours illustrate the operational value and contribution the FAO Community makes to CNO's "Warfighting First, Operate Forward, Be Ready" Navigation Plan for 2015-2019. The Milestone process is essential in ensuring Service, Joint, and Interagency assignments are manned with qualified FAOs possessing the required level of maturity, experience, and knowledge.

The Milestone Process is similar to the URL's Command and Major Command Screen Boards. Similar to the URL, selection as a Milestone Screened Officer supports selective detailing to Milestone billets. Unlike Command Screening, where you are detailed to a specific command, FAOs are screened primarily on their ability to perform well in the three "functional" lines of FAO work: Political-Military Staff, Security Cooperation, and Attaché.

Notionally, FAOs receive two consecutive "in-zone" looks for both Milestone (MS) and Major Milestone (MMS) prior to their in-zone look for promotion to O-5 and O-6.ⁱ Eligibility is based on the FY of their Date of Rank (DoR). LCDRs will be eligible for their first and second MS looks four (4) and five (5) years following their DoR FY, respectively. CDRs will be eligible for their first and second MMS looks three (3) and four (4) years following their DoR FY, respectively. Since the Milestone process is independent from promotion planning, statutory promotion in-zone look may not sequentially follow Milestone screening. Also, there may be situations where new lateral transfer selectees are not afforded the requisite milestone looks before they screen for promotion. In these instances, special/additional looks may be requested in accordance with MILPERSMAN 1301-809.

The average milestone selection rate is approximately 40% of FAO CAPT and 60% of FAO CDR Requirements (billets). Officers who successfully screen for MS or MMS **and** promotion are awarded the FM1 and FM3 Additional Qualification Designation (AQD) respectively. After receiving an FM1 or FM3 AQD **and** upon successful completion of a MS or MMS tour, officers are awarded the FM2 and FM4 AQD respectively.ⁱⁱ The FM1 and FM3 AQDs are prerequisites to receiving the FM2 and FM4 AQDs respectively. *An additional requirement for award of FM4 is JFAOC Phase II completion.*ⁱⁱⁱ **Selection for CDR Milestone and completion of a CDR Milestone billet is not a prerequisite for selection Major Milestone.** In other words, don't give up hope if you do not Milestone screen—you can "get well" and will be eligible for Major Milestone screen. This also accounts for those who access into the community after their timing for CDR milestone board. Records that include FM2 and FM4 will be stronger before subsequent Major Milestone and/or promotion screen boards as reflected in the Convening Orders.

To date, all milestone screened officers have selected for promotion in-zone, but not all promotion selected officers are milestone screened. A portion of non-milestone screened FAOs are expected to continue to promote to Commander and Captain. As the proportion of milestone screened officers by year group has normalized in the community's board process, the proportion of non-milestone screened FAOs selected for promotion to O-5 (including above-zone selects) has decreased. This trend is likely to repeat itself for O-6 promotions following the FAO Community's MMS Screen process.

While there has been a strong correlation between milestone screening and selection for promotion, the only real connection between the promotion and milestone boards is the relative competitive nature of an officer's record against his or her peers. While not a prerequisite for promotion, milestone screen makes a record stronger by sending a signal to the board that an officer made an additional cut within the FAO community. The milestone complete AQDs (FM2 and FM4) are **foremost indicators of a stellar record that has been further validated by continued success in a milestone billet.**

The identification process of the billets for the Milestone Billet List is rigorous and the results support and are aligned with the National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy and the international engagement emphasis of the Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century. These billets are the best estimate of where the FAO community's talent needs to be directed to serve the best interests of the Navy, in line with CNO strategic guidance and objectives. The FAO Flag Community Sponsor (OPNAV N52) reviews, approves, and signs the Milestone Billet List as required prior to the milestone screen board to codify valid milestone requirements and is final approval authority of the milestone officers slated to fill these important jobs. Due to the evolving nature of FAO work, critical and high visibility/profile international engagement work/locations/billets are expected to shift slightly due to the very dynamic nature of global politics, the security environment, and the corresponding strategic billet realignment to this changing environment. Periodic adjustments to the Milestone billet list are expected to be most pronounced during the period of community growth during progress toward FOC as approved by VCNO which phases 87 existing operational Navy/Joint/Interagency billets to the community through Fiscal Year (FY) 19. This will stabilize as the FAO community reaches FOC with billet changes and/or additions in the out-years (post-FOC) occurring due to evolutionary vice revolutionary strategic priority shifts.

The criteria used to select the billets for the Commander and Major Milestone lists are based on but not limited to the following:

- High level of direct oversight and influence over interactions with foreign governments, their militaries and international organizations.
- Leading a group of FAOs on policy definition, development, and implementation for a fleet or combatant commander (COCOM) in the area of political-military operations and engagements with other nations.
- High level of direct management of efficient/effective information exchanges, yielding sustained and strong long-term relationships with foreign government and military leaders.
- Overall supervision of teams coordinating and implementing security cooperation programs, ensuring the highest level of interoperability is gained and building partner nation capacity.
- Advise and assist policy definition, development, and implementation for the Navy Personnel Command and FAO Flag Community Sponsor relating to FAO career development, personnel detailing, and community health and growth.

The Milestone Billet List serves two detailing purposes. First, it prioritizes FAO work and community requirements for the detailee. And second, similar to Command Billets, it allows for additional assignment flexibility (e.g. detaching officers at 24 vice 36 months) in order to assign personnel to fill priority community billets. The FAO Community Management Team in Millington takes numerous factors into account when slating Milestone assignments to ensure the needs of the Navy balanced as much as possible with the individual's career progression and family desires are met. Many Navy initiatives govern officer detailing decisions and must be considered during detailing. Exceptional Family Members (EFM), dual military co-locations, unique medical limitations, timing, and the like will be considered and, when at all possible, accommodated when assigning FAOs to Milestone tours. However, there will be circumstances where officers are detailed to Milestone assignments, possibly unaccompanied, to ensure that they stay due course. In rare cases, there may also be situations where a Milestone Screened Officer cannot be detailed directly to a Milestone Tour after selection due to timing or other considerations. In this situation, the Officer is still considered due course, and will be slated to a Milestone Billet at the earliest opportunity. In the end, PRD timing, career requirements, and availability of milestone assignments will all influence the slating and detailing to fill these jobs.

Either before or after milestone, FAOs will be asked to serve in non-milestone billets similar to pre- or post-command/milestone assignments throughout the Navy. Just because a billet is not on the milestone billet list does not mean that it is not important work. Soliciting undue outside influence on the detailing process is not encouraged. Clearly articulating the criteria for milestone credit and continuing to practice

good detailing discipline that balances the good of the individual and the good of the Navy is the method the FAO community will use to maximize the impact that the FAO milestone process can have on the FAO community's contribution to the warfighter world-wide.

Officers may formally decline milestone selection or defer slating in writing to the FAO Community Manager and Detailer, but this is **highly discouraged**.^{iv} Before declining or deferring milestone, FAOs must be aware of the consequences. If an officer declines, this removes the officer from the milestone screen bank (removal of FM1 or FM3 AQDs) and they will not be offered another milestone tour at a future date. If an officer defers milestone, there is no guarantee that the community will be able to offer them a second milestone opportunity that meets their career timing. Deferring officers must accept that they are second in detailing priority to non-deferring milestone screened officers. The written statement declining FAO milestone assignment will be made part of the officer's permanent record as a Field Code 17 (FC17).^v For those deferring CDR milestone, an FC17 will be entered into their service record if milestone completion cannot be made prior to their second Major Milestone Screening. FC17 information will be permanently available for review by future promotion and administrative board which significantly impacts further promotion opportunity.

As a whole, the Milestone Process has greatly improved the health of the FAO community. As an integral part of the FAO Community's Career Path, and as our most similar to command, it translates well to FAO and non-FAO board members alike, and Milestone Tours serve as clear career timing gates for our FAOs and community management to meet when detailing. The Milestone Process is a critical tool to formalize a FAO's Career Path and takes us one step closer to fully professionalizing our Community by FOC.

ⁱ See MILPERSMAN 1301-809

ⁱⁱ FM1 through FM4 are also defined in the Navy Officer Manpower and Personnel Classifications Manual Volume I, <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/noc/NOOCSVol1/Pages/default.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ OPNAVINST 3701.10C

^{iv} See MILPERSMAN 1301-809

^v See MILPERSMAN 1070-020

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